
FISCAL TOPICS

Fiscal Services Division

November 5, 2019



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Judicial Retirement System

The Judicial Retirement System provides pensions for Supreme Court Justices, Court of Appeals Judges, District Court Judges, District Associate Judges, Associate Probate Judges, and Associate Juvenile Judges. Magistrates are covered by the Iowa Public Employees' Retirement System. The State Court Administrator is responsible for the administration of the Judicial Retirement System,¹ and the State Treasurer's Office is responsible for the investment of the funds.²

A judge is eligible to retire at age 65 with a minimum of four years of service, or at age 50 with 20 years of service. All active judges are required to retire at age 72, although a judge may apply for senior judge status. As a senior judge, the judge receives a monthly retirement annuity along with an annual salary set by the General Assembly.³ A senior judge must work a minimum of 13 weeks a year but may not practice law. Judges participating in the Senior Judge Program are required to retire at age 78 unless reappointed by the Supreme Court for additional one-year terms up to age 80.

The monthly retirement benefit is based on the average salary for the three highest-paid years of service multiplied by 3.25%, multiplied by the number of years of service, with a maximum amount not to exceed 65.0% of the highest basic annual salary. The normal form of payment is an annuity payable for the lifetime of the judge. Half of the amount is payable to an eligible surviving spouse upon the judge's death. A judge can receive a disability retirement for total and permanent disability after a minimum of four years of credited service.

Membership Statistics

There are currently 205 active judges and 220 retired members (including beneficiaries). The average salary for an active member is \$146,136, and the average annual benefit for a retired member is \$64,371. The average age of an active member is 55.6, and the average number of years of service is 9.9.

Actuarial Valuation Factors

The current statutory required contribution rate for a judge is 9.35%, and the State's required contribution rate is 30.0%.⁴ As of the July 1, 2019, actuarial valuation report, the Judicial Retirement System had a funded ratio of 86.15%. Per Iowa Code, the first year that the System reaches fully funded status, meaning that the most recent actuarial valuation reports the System is at least 100.0% funded, the contribution rates will change to a percentage rate equal to 60.0% employer and 40.0% employee.⁵ The current percentage rate is 76.6% employer and 23.4% employee. As of July 1, 2019, the actuarial value of assets was reported at \$209.9 million and the actuarial value of liabilities was reported at \$243.6 million, resulting in an unfunded actuarial accrued liability of \$33.7 million.

Related Statutes

Iowa Code chapter [602](#)
1070335

¹ Iowa Code [§602.9102](#).

² Iowa Code [§602.9111](#).

³ Iowa Code [§602.9204](#)(1).

⁴ Iowa Code [§602.9104](#).

⁵ Iowa Code [§602.9104](#).

More Information

Judicial Branch: www.iowacourts.gov

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